

# Nomade

Number 5  
Summer 2010

Newspaper of the Brussels No Border camp



## Hundreds of activists face thousands of police forces !

Since the last Nomade, a lot has happened. Just a year ago, 500 people gathered, “welcomed” by 2500 police officers, to build a No Border camp in Calais and denounce a particularly aggressive and inhumane local political situation.

Since then, nothing has changed really if not for the worse : at the end of the summer, Eric Besson kept his promise of a clean sweep : the urban jungle and squats of Calais disappeared one after the other under the bulldozers and the migrants were scattered across the territory giving the illusion of a good cleanup. However, once the press lost interest, migrants slowly came back and everything started again although this time round police forces are making sure they cannot settle, chasing them relentlessly. What has really changed since the last camp is that the no border movement is now deeply rooted in Calais and that militants from neighbouring countries joined forces with local activists against the authorities. There has been the hard and highly publicised evacuation of the Kronstadt hangar,

hired out to welcome migrants, the eviction and destruction of the Africa House, an “African squat”, the closing of several places of housing for migrants... The last few months have been hard and exhausting for the many activists on site. A lot of discouragement, deception and weariness for the No Border network which has nonetheless gained a lot by the relentless vigilance, presence and circulation of the Calais Migrants Solidarity network over the internet and in grassroots organisations. Yet in Calais we are still short of people, equipment, money and means of actions against the authorities.

Meanwhile, in the minister of deportation and discrimination, Besson just can't wait. He spent years waiting for this: in September, his 86 articles bill will be discussed in Parliament! We will at last be able to align ourselves with the Directive of Shame passed last year by the European parliament and even go further in iniquity. The idea is for France to spearhead the European immigration policy. Soon the country will be turned into a large

waiting room for immigrants without any respect for their rights. Then again, they will first have to find a way to avoid being tracked down and turned back by the European security agency, Frontex. How fun does the future sound ! Vichy probably rings a bell ; apart from the « integration » summit organised 18 months ago by Hortefeux for the benefit of all European immigration ministers. At a time when Europe is busy barricading itself, the No border creed is all the more necessary.

Freedom of movement for all and abolition of all physical, economical and social borders. Diversity brings us closer, exclusion only tears us apart ! Say no to nation states which locks up and brings down diversity whilst creating phony national identities behind which are hidden the political and economical interests of a few ! Say no to a European police state which arms itself to the teeth and promotes more CCTV, more over-equipped police forces and more repression inside the EU.

# Calais, an endless story ?



***“I was told that Vichy was over...”, it's been a little more than a year since this inscription had flourished on the walls of Lille. This sentence finds its full meaning in the situation in Calais today. Last year, as well as the ten preceding it, has been sickening for the refugees of the coast and the supporters of the No Border.***

**T**he comparison between the situation in the city of Calais and that of France under Vichy is not limited to a resentment against the high number of cops (more than 500 in Calais, mobilized solely for the presence of the exiles) nor to the oppression imposed by them. In fact the similarities between the two periods are many: first, the fact that the presence of a population is raised as a “problem”: there is political consensus between the right and left wing around an “immigration problem”. Divergences are only on the methods to solve such “problem”. Second, all proposed solutions entail the partial or total expulsion of these people. The fates of the exiles do not interest the authority: *“once the border is crossed, the authority does not hold itself responsible for anything, and abandons them in full indifference”* (1). Third, it can be observed that the range of procedures used in the framework of this manhunt respond to encrypted ob-

jectives : raids, trap-summons, interpellation of humanitarian aid workers distributing food to them, or of their children in schools (for Jews in 1942 as well as for undocumented migrants, all over France today). And finally: administrative detention. The last similarity to be mentioned is clearly the fact that these policies generate oppositions that States suppress and suffocate. In spite of their absolute legitimacy.

words (the nazi occupation of the city during the second world war), repression actually rose up trying to make the migrants invisible as it is not possible to make them disappear. French state cannot do anything against presence of migrants on the coast, despite of the media and politic discourse recurrent after Sangatte, which presents actions of the state on the coast as a clear message to the world, namely migrations to UK will not any more

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After one year, situation in Calais assumed a new dimension. Besson and his henchmen decided to « liberate Calais » from migrants, as the prefect De Bousquet De Florian stated. Beside the creepy parallelism evoked by these

pass through Calais. This discourse is contradicted by the reality: less than one week after the very mediatic destruction of the Pashtun jungle, there were new migrants' shelters five metres further than the site.

“ We were given tents but the police took them back. What is the difference between dogs and us ? “. The form of the repression remains unchanged but its intensity is continuously growing and reinforcing, getting more and more inhumane. Throughout the last year, all camps, jungle and squats of migrants in the area of Calais have been destroyed (the destruction of the last remaining one, the oldest, the African House, started on the 21st June 2010). Events of this kind are sadly usual in the area, but their recent frequency and their matching with other actions demonstrate a clear will to make the exiles disappear from the landscape. Camps and squats are systematically destroyed, tents and other humanitarian materials are brought to the dump-sites, and migrants seen in the city centre during the night are harassed during their sleep. A new distribution point for food has been constructed in the outskirts of the town in order to limit its visibility, and the Red Cross teams on the spot are changed every two months, to avoid that they get used to their dirty job, and to make sure that they don't ever get emotionally attached to it. Let us not forget that they are great humanitarian workers: it is unacceptable, in France, to let people live in such unhealthy places: in the streets, without a tent nor a coat, it's so much better! Refugees appreciate not to have to doubt about a humanity that shows itself through tear-gas and batons.

Resistance is getting organized since one year ago around local and international No Border activists from all over Europe (further information on : [calaismigrantsolidarity.wordpress.com](http://calaismigrantsolidarity.wordpress.com)). Activity of No Border after the Calais camp consists in a constant presence on the site, with several aims: monitoring police activities for avoiding as much as possible police violence against refugees, helping migrants according to their needs, opening squats but also and especially organizing a political dissent against conditions in which refugees live and against racist policies deployed by the French state and the European Union. Police repression against dissent is very strong after the destruction of the jungle and of many squats that took place in the end of 2009. Every attempt of mobilisation which started from migrants, supported by No Border activists, have been brutally stopped by police and ended up with arrests.

One of the best examples are the hunger

strikes: the first one started for protesting against the destruction of the jungles and of the squats, the second one, during the winter, was a protest against police harassments and against the unacceptable situation concerning arbitrary opening and closing of the open space in the framework of the “big cold” plan. All the hunger strikes and the others attempts of public mobilization lasted not more than half a day before being stifled by police. Each attempt of demonstration from No Borders or migrants were blocked by police.

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In February, SôS Soutien aux Sans Papiers and No Border activists present in Calais opened a space, the hangar in rue Kronstadt, thought as a place for political sharing and common struggle among migrants and activists. All the politically responsables have had their little say on the issue and the press took over the affair, calling it a “ Sangatte 2 ”. Everything got then carried away. The police, without any request, acted in enforcement of the rules, drew away the press and anyone who could witness, and vandalised the entrance

and the spaces. Some personal belongings have disappeared; those present have been assaulted and arrested. The hangar attempted a reopening a week later and the result was the same.

The justice system is legalising all this, showing once more that it is serving the State. No Border militants bustled about creating contacts at European level, by organising militants' meetings on the two sides of the Channel, such as on the occasion of the action “Passons la manche” (Let us cross the Channel) or on the occasion of an encounter with a co-operative hosting migrants in Coventry.

The situation in Calais is most worrisome ; migrants are facing a more and more precarious situation and the responsibilities of this human catastrophe lie on the European Union and on its Member States. Borders are maintained in spite of their aberration and of the human costs they bear. The fact that these borders are in concrete terms useless and permeable does not play any role for decision-makers. The very existence of borders allows for controlling those who live inside. of them. The meaning of borders for political decision-makers and for the system as a whole relies on this simple assumption: though they are not fulfilling their own purposes, borders allow for maintaining the social boundaries among people. This is why today is more than ever important to fight all forms of security, camps, borders, and nations, uniting the fight on this neuralgic point.

**No Border ! No Nation !**

# BRICE LE SBIRE



**"Nazi? Non, je n'ai pas de fureur."**

# The European border agency Frontex in the Aegean

*Frontex is the European border agency, founded in 2004 and operational since 2005. The agency has their seat in Warsaw, Poland, from where it directs its activities. Although it is often believed, Frontex is not an actual border police, with a staff in uniform and with the task to actually police the borders of the EU. Rather, Frontex is a coordinating mechanism of the European Union organizing the cooperation of the border police bodies of the member states of the EU. In this respect, Frontex is like a meta border police: it is both above and behind the everyday practices of border guards.*

To this end, Frontex combines a lot of tasks and activities in one body that in the traditional nation state have been kept separate. There is an intelligence service component: Frontex is actively monitoring and pooling data about all that is going on at the external borders of the E.U., so that predictions to movements of migration can be made. Frontex refers to this as risk analysis, a whole department at the headquarters in Warsaw is busy with this and well connected to its national counterparts in Europe. There is also a research division, which – in cooperation with military industries and universities – is pushing for the high-tech-sci-fi border of the 21st century. Current plans include real-time surveillance of the border on all levels, including live satellite imagery, the use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV aka drones, usually deployed in war zones like Afghanistan and Iraq) for close-ups, and all other tools at the disposition of a border guard: radar, cameras, etc. Another project is the introduction of biometric identity checks at all border crossings. Recently, Frontex has also been more involved in the organization and financing of mass deportations, where a whole plane would be chartered and refugees from all over Europe would be put in the plane to then be deported to their assumed country of origin. In 2009, Frontex did more than 30 such flights, removing more than 1.500 people from European territory. The main focus of Frontex, however, is the coordination of cooperation at the actual border, as they refer to it. Since the agency became operational, Frontex has organized so called “joint operations”, where a E.U member state would invite other E.U member states to send border guard personal and equipment for a joint policing of the borders.

There are three tested responses to irregular migration, and the operations of Frontex in Greece and the Aegean have elements of all of them. The first would be to integrate Tur-



key into the border regime (similar to the case of Libya). On an institutional level, Frontex is trying to connect with the Turkish coast guard and to involve them in joint maneuvers and also seeks a working agreement with the Turkish border authority. But also Greece and the E.U are trying to improve their cooperation with Turkey on migration matters: While Greece and Turkey have a readmission agreement (which Greece would like to extend, since practically, its functioning is questionable), the E.U has been negotiating such an agreement for many years with Turkey, albeit without success so far. Functional readmission agreements would force Turkey to readmit not only nationals, but all irregular migrants who can be proved to have entered Greece and the EU via Turkey. This would shift the responsibility for securing borders and inhibiting the movements of migration to Turkey.

The second strategy aims to reinforce the border controls between Greece and Turkey, both at the land border in the Evros region as well as between the Turkish coast and the Greek islands of Lesbos, Chios, Samos and

## The Aegean

**In 2009, 150.000 irregular migrants were intercepted in Greece, which amounts for 75% of all interceptions in the EU. Even though in 2010, this number is likely to drop again, it is clear that the closure of other routes to Europe (West Africa to Spain, Libya to Italy/Malta) has made Greece the presently last remaining gateway to the EU, turning it into an embattled ground where the EU is intervening decisively.**

Rhodos. For 2010, Frontex has announced they would hold their largest operation ever in Greece, thus mobilizing border guards and equipment from all over Europe. Concerning the land borders, the task is clear: sealing off and patrolling the border, possibly involving high-tech equipment for better monitoring of movements. At the sea borders, the task is much more unclear, since the geographical specificity of the islands close to the Turkish coasts don't allow for the “diversion” of boats



carrying potential irregular migrants. Still, an immense focus of Frontex seems to lie on intercepting and detaining migrants on the sea. One can only speculate to the motivations. For one, it is the interest of the border guards to establish custody of irregular migrants as early as possible. Another possible motivation is both to present a more decisive effort of guarding the border so that a crossing of the border seems more risky. Frontex

field test, in the detention center of Samos island, where a so called translator is active in the center, interviewing the detainees and writing his version of their identity and story. It is however his version that becomes the official version, which makes deportation both legitimate and feasible : in the case of Samos, many migrants reported that the Frontex investigator denied their claim that they were from Palestine (to where no deportations can

have set up a deportation center in Athens and in the framework of their so called operation Attica have started to negotiate with other countries for the readmission of their nationals, effectively building a deportation system which most other E.U member states have and with which Frontex has a lot of experience giving its involvement with charter deportations.

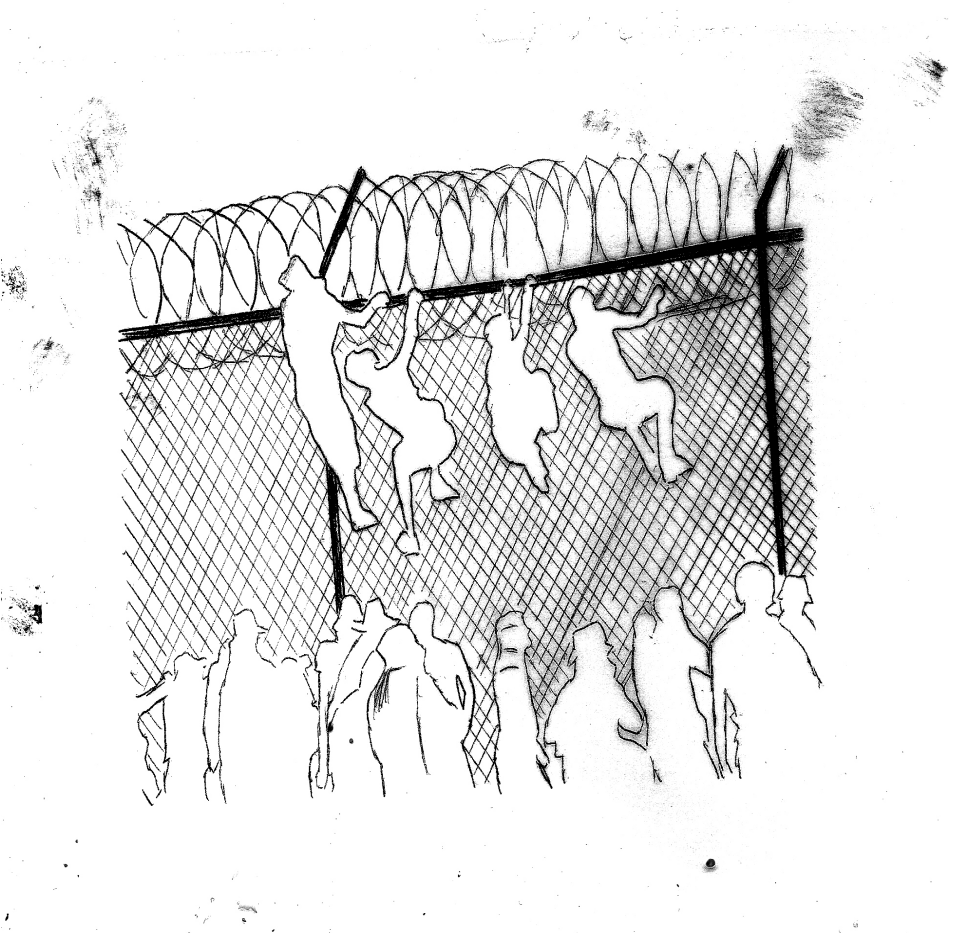
***Many migrants reported that the Frontex investigator denied their claim that they were from Palestine (to where no deportations can be made morally and practically) and changing their nationality to one that Turkey would accept under the Greek-Turkish readmission agreement.***

has also been known to put a focus on going after facilitators of undocumented border crossings, so interfering with such crossings as early as possible might improve their chances to identify so called “smugglers”. In the end, it is also thinkable that Frontex attempts to establish a chain of evidence (footage from helicopters, portraits of those intercepted, protocols of interception) for all migrants to be able to present to the Turkey authorities an irrefutable claim that they did actually come from Turkey and are thus eligible for deportation under the readmission agreement.

be made morally and practically) and changing their nationality to one that Turkey would accept under the Greek-Turkish readmission agreement.while only few migrants are released from Samos detention center, most are transferred to Athens, where they are held in yet a different detention center only to be transferred further to detention centers in the Evros region (Venna, for example) from where they are ultimately deported to Turkey. But while deportations to Turkey are still difficult and apply only to a few nationalities, Frontex has been known to

This example of the activities of Frontex in the Aegean demonstrates why Frontex is not just another border guard institution, or the europeanized version of a national border guard entity. While many components of what Frontex is involved in (patrolling, passport checks, etc) are comparable to the tasks of their national counterparts, its practice as a border authority is generally orthogonal to how a nation state would handle its borders. The approach of Frontex can only be described as cross-sectional, both geographically and methodically. Geographically, Frontex operates outside, on and inside the border, while methodically, Frontex combines all sorts of “services” around controlling “illegal” migration: interception, interrogation, identity checks and deportation are all part of the parcel, and Greece seems to be happy to accept the whole deal.

The third strategy is to internalize the border. After all, the border is a selection mechanism to split between “ *legitimate and illegitimate* ” travelers, granting differing rights according to this categorization. Concerning irregular migrants, this selection process must not necessarily happen right at the border: the Greek state is intent on building so called screening centers in all geographic locations where migrants might be encountered: the land and sea borders, the metropolitan centers as well as at the points of exit, where migrants attempt to continue their journey north-bound. Amongst other purposes, the screening centers allow for an individualization of migration, meaning that in the centers, the multiplicity of detained migrants are divided into single individuals with a distinct identity, history, situation, etc. This allows for differential treatment. While those found to be in need of protection might obtain asylum, most migrants will be identified as “economic migrants”, thus not legitimate to have entered the country and need to be deported. It is exactly this filtration and deportation process which Frontex is establishing, like in a



# Transnational action against Frontex in Dakar 2011



*Each night Spanish navy ships set sail out of the Dakar, Senegal, harbour hunting for boat refugees which are attempting to reach the Canary Islands. Frontex is actively patrolling the West-African seas since 2006 within the framework of the Joint Operation HENA up to 1300 kilometers from the Southern-European coast. In the lead up to the World Social Forum – WSF 2011 – in Dakar actions be organised against Frontex’ presence in Senegal. During the No Border camp in Brussels there will be more focus on the Transnational Campaign against Frontex. Hopefully the Association Malienne des Expulsés will be present to tell about the Caravane Citoyenne Bamako-Dakar for free migration just before the WSF 2011.*

Previous years we’ve witness that the European border security has increasingly come to exist beyond the geographical borders. The European Union is since 2001 demanding her member states that each joint operating agreement includes a clause about the ‘mutual management of migration flux’ (read: preventing ‘clandestine’ migration) and the obligatory readmission of ‘illegal’ migrants from Europe. Over the past years Senegal and Mauretania have signed several readmission agreements with Spain and France. In 2006 it has been agreed that Spain will carry out joint surveillance operations along the West-African coast together with Senegal and Mauretania. This agreement consist of a gift of four navy boats, a helicopter, 20 specifically trained border guards by the Guardia Civil and the financing of 63 police and 37 gendarmerie checkpoints on the Mali and Senegal borders. The latter includes police unit trainings, vehicles, and modern technology. “Europe is closing our borders!” was the conclusion of the Senegalese newspa-

per Le Soleil. Expulsions of migrants from the Canary Islands to Senegal are very unpopular among the population of Senegal that’s blaming their government of betrayal. African states have become ‘Europe’s gendarmerie’.

## Development aid against migration flows

Border controls, readmission of ‘illegal’ migrants and development make up a three-unit of the integral European migration policy. In Mali 17 new border crossing points at the Mauretania and Algeria borders are financed by AENAS-funds (which aim is to technically and financially support a more effective management of migration flows in transit countries, particularly the readmission of ‘illegal’ migrants from Europe). The readmission agreement with Spain in 2006 – which has been prolonged early 2010 – offered 20 million euro of development aid to Senegal. Europe is paying for the detention of migrants

that are intending to go to Europe and the collective expulsions to neighbouring countries. The detention center in Nouadhibou, Mauretania, has been financed by Spanish development aid, even though it’s (poorly) run by Mauretania (on request by Spain as Mauretanian authorities admitted). From this detention center, where legal support is not available, collective expulsions to Mali and Senegal are carried out (financed by Spain as well).

Senegalese human rights activist Badara Ndiaye pretends that the efforts by the EU have caused an increase of detained migrants. “The European border has been pushed back to Senegal. This increase of intimidation actions doesn’t guarantee anything for the refugees that are involved in mixed migration flows”.

**More news about the campaign against Frontex and the Caravane Citoyenne Bamako-Dakar: [www.noborder.org](http://www.noborder.org)**

# Calais afterwards

*2002 Strasbourg NoBorder Camp has been hit by criminal police repression. It's nevertheless still a reference for many anarchists.*

Yet between 2002 and 2009, no No Border collective was created in France, at least none that was known of us in 2009. The struggle against borders was pursued throughout new or existing organisations against expulsions, helping children being at school and their parents to stay in France, demanding regularisation for all undocumented people, fighting for freedom of migration. But claims of freedom of movement and settlement, showing how borders are necessary to maintain capitalism and neo-colonialism are often only understated in their claims and actions.

Calais, France, is a border-city particularly affected by European migration policies. Migrants live there in dirty squats, thickets and suffer – together with those who support them – constant police repression. Brutal on migrants – beatings, insults, humiliations, arrests, property destructions, harassment –, sometimes more « subtle » for the others: trials, detention, insults, etc. By ending 2008, U.K No Border network – very well organised, with local collectives (London, Birmingham, etc.) and experience gained during 2007 Gatwick No Border Camp – wants to make visible the permanent drama occurring on the Franco-English border. One of the means will be the 2009 Calais No Border Camp. It took place under suffocating and irrational police pressure throughout the week as well as on the « Big Demonstration » day. By the end of the camp, the border was not open, and the main conclusion was that the State is ready to put unlimited efforts in preventing the growth of a movement against borders.

Nevertheless, a No Border Collective was created in Calais including Calaisians and European – mainly from U.K NoBorder network – activists. The goal is to monitor and prevent police violence on and arrests of migrants, to publish information on the situation and its evolution at an international level. And it's partially successful as No Border has been on the field in Calais doing this for one full year. Calais Migrant Solidarity website makes it possible to everyone to stay informed and helps to get organised and prepared to come in Calais. By the end of 2009, a No Border collective was built in Paris in order to organise a « Day of Actions for « Freedom of Movement » » that took place on the 15th of May 2010, despite 1000 cops for 100 demonstrators. And recently, activists in Lille participated to a « Week of Actions against the Deportation Machine » in Lille and Arras, including actions against companies profiting from it.

It took 8 years for a No Border Camp to happen again in France. Only one year after, there is another one not far away from Calais. From the 25th of September to the 3rd of October 2010, the next one will take place in Brussels. Belgians activists managed to block Lesquin – near Lille – detention centre during Calais camp. Since then among other nice things, they simultaneously blocked 2 detention centres out of the 3 officially existing in Belgium ! The No Border network is being structured regionally near the UK-FR-BE border. It is capable to organise actions of various sizes. It's time to create new No Border collectives or to join it. Be it to organise an event for the camp infotour,



Arras market, France  
june 2010

or to easily contact other collectives for support on campaigns and local actions. Anyway, see you at Brussels camp to get organised! Or even before, for events like the June 19-20th Brussels international preparation days !

# NO BORDER CAMP in BRUSSELS

SEPTEMBER 25 to OCTOBER 3 - 2010

*The NO BORDER CAMP IN BRUSSELS follows the tradition of No Border camps, organised all over the world since the 90s. Neither a normative frame, nor an organization, the No Border Camp is most of all a meeting, a convergence of struggles aiming to end the system of borders that divided us all. Like in Calais or Lesbos in 2009 it's about building a temporary and autonomous space of living, thinking, sharing (experiences, skills, information, analysis,...) actions concerning the questions of borders, migration and the right of freedom of movement and to choose the place where you want to live.*

## OUR BASIC DEMANDS ARE :

- No one is illegal !
- No borders, no nations !
- Equal rights for everybody !
- Freedom of movement and settlement !
- Against capitalist and authoritarian systems that are the origin of forced exile, wars and misery.

## WHY BRUSSELS ?

Belgium will take presidency of the European council from July 1st until 21st of December 2010. As the capital of Europe Brussels is the symbol of the development of the European (anti-) migration policy. In reality the European union is, since over 10 years) more and more closing its doors for migrants, constructing a real fortress Europe. Europe tightens the repression (forcing people into clandestine existence, raids, locking people up and expelling "people without papers") that is already enforced by Belgium and the different member states. So Europe is organising, with the help of Frontex (European agency organising the operational cooperation at the exterior borders) border patrols, helicopters, boats, and it shifts its frontiers towards Asia and Africa by financing states (from Ukraine up to Morocco) to enforce the prevention of migration in its name. By organising a No Border Camp in Brussels we want to question this (anti-) migration policy

## WHEN IN BRUSSELS ?

- The construction of the camp will be from September 24th until September 26th 2010.
- Activities will start on September 27th and will continue until October 3th.
- On Saturday October 2nd a big manifestation is planned.



During this week we would like to see Brussels swarming with different activities about (anti-) migration policy and its consequences. The camp is also offering the opportunity to fight together with different action strategies, but also to build up a long term dynamic. We invite all (individuals or collectives) to participate as they see fit and to propose their own activities or cooperations.

## HOW TO SUPPORT AND HOW TO PARTICIPATE ?

A no border Camp is what everybody wants to make of it, everybody can play his /her part and offer support.

- By participating in the organisation of the camp, by working in one of the different workinggroups (mobilisation, logistics, media, big demo, internet, medical, programming, welcoming committee, finances, translations, cooking and juridical)
- By making a (modest or genial) proposal for a workshop, film, expo, lecture. We propose the following themes:

- The security politics Frontex and the militarisation of borders.
- Clandestinity and the struggle of migrants.
- Capitalism and migration.
- Closed detention centres for migrants and deportations.
- European (anti-)migration politics.
- By mobilising, participating in actions, coming to the big demo, or by organising your own actions that can halt the deportation machine.
- By organising a benefit (a concert, a night out, a popular kitchen)
- By proposing terrains, sites, sleeping places for actions or activists.
- By doing a financial or material donation
- By offering material (tents, vans, kitchen material, portable toilets...)

You also can join us. The more we are to bring about change, the faster fortress Europe will fall.

**Nobordercamp@vluchteling.be**  
**INFO: [www.noborderbxl.eu.org](http://www.noborderbxl.eu.org)**

# Undocumented migrants in Belgium

## the cycles of struggle

*By many eurocrats and regionally elected dreamt of as a center of power; Brussels is demolishing its neighbourhoods to erect business parks and searching for ways to concentrate poverty in discrete reservoirs. It's specifically there where you'll meet undocumented migrants, which are sometimes very capable militants for freedom of movement.*

Moroccans, Congolese, Ecuadorians, Afghans and many other migrants are providing a workforce for different sectors like construction, cleaning, bars and restaurants, informal trade and prostitution. Alongside the 'Petit Château' asylum seekers shelter African day labourers aren't hiding but instead offering their labour out in the streets. Belgian taxes on labour are high enough in order to legitimise black wages and consider it as common sense. This reality can't exist without staying blind and being supported by a largely racist police force and a strong administrative wall. First mentioned is being illustrated by the murder of Semira Adamu by suffocation on September 22 1998, the raid on 80 Ecuadorians in June 2003 and the beating and imprisonment of 100 people occupying the church of Anderlecht. The administration, named Immigration Office<sup>1</sup>, is based in the Rogier business park – the North Gate – and gains all its strength from the undefined laws on migration. The regularisation campaign in 2009 didn't succeed in creating any permanent guideline and is now subjected to the successive ministers; like gymnastics performing figures in front of a radical right wing crowd. They've always opposed the three regularisation opportunities to be released since the first one in 1974. Semira's death wasn't an isolated event. The 'right' atmosphere has been created since the state started building a closed detention center in 1988 (plus five more through the following years and one which is being constructed right now<sup>2</sup>) and the implementation of the Schengen Convention in 1996. Documented and undocumented people have responded to this by creating several associations but have hardly been listened to by the authorities. The most outstanding events are probably the occupation of the construction site of the Vottem detention center by the so-called 'Collectif de Résistance Aux Centres Pour Etrangers' and the evasion of 31 detained migrants in the Steenokkerzeel camp supported by the 'Collectif Contre Les Expulsions'. The repression of this movement,



which became crystallised by the death of Semira, succeeded in breaking the dynamics just before the regularisation campaign in 1999. In 1974 this involved 8000 cases. This one in 1999 allowed 42.000 people (out of 60.000 files) to find a way out of their clandestine life. The next cycle, which had begun in 2003 by Afghan refugees, ended a year ago by a new regularisation campaign. This came as a late and meagre response from those in power to the uproar that the movement of undocumented migrants had initiated over the past few years. The 'Union de Défense des Etrangers sans Papiers (UDEP) came to exist in 2004 in response to an urging need of self-organisation as the undocumented migrants had more and more become controlled by structures which are linked to the state. In those early days UDEP managed to occupy 60 churches simultaneously with more than 600 people between March and June in 2006. They've also proposed a law in the Parliament which was based upon permanent guidelines for regularisation of undocumented migrants. This proposal of common sense has still not been treated, nor did it receive any response except for the promise of a punctual regularisation in 2009 which has only been executed after a year of struggle, occupations and hungerstrikes. While releasing its results drop by drop, the process of regularisation

has already changed the faith of many undocumented migrants. Some have been refused the regularisation by a job offer on behalf of the 'reason' that the sector they'd be hired to isn't part of a sector which is under pressure, or to be reserved for foreign citizens. Return to construction work, restaurants, cleaning... Others won't be regularised because they lack some months of stay on the Belgian territory. But no certificate is needed to prove that they've been in this struggle for four or five years. Their experience proves and explains that this movement has constantly renewed itself to be better equipped to cope with the traps of negotiation, the little value a promise by the state actually has, the price to pay for the union's support, the weakness of the internal democracy. During the No Border camp that will come to Brussels, the undocumented migrants should at least be expecting a place where this memory of the Belgian movement can meet other experiences of struggle which are all very unique but yet still all related. But let's hope that the No Border camp will not only remain limited to this minimalistic objective but also learn from those testimonies and experiences.

<sup>1</sup> : 50 international activists have been staging on the construction site on the 25th of June.

# Migration-policy is toughed up more and more

*Since a migration stop has been announced in 1974, The gateway for foreign workers in Belgium has been shut almost completely. Meanwhile almost nothing has been done to build up a modern migration policy. All political parties have however, been pushing to develop a new migration policy, mainly because it would be an opportunity to execute an effective deportation policy. Nowadays the frustration of politicians is growing over the inability of the government to deport the tens of thousands undocumented migrants out of the country. The latest campaign of regularisation was a prelude to a much bigger game: a new migration policy with clear criteria to designate who is not welcome and how to smoothly deport those unwelcome migrants out of our society.*



The 'general' regularisation in 2009 was finally pushed through by a compromise between the political left and right over the criteria that would determine the conditions on which an undocumented migrants could obtain a (temporary) residence permit.. The right wing politicians tried to exclude as much undocumented migrants as possible from this regularisations, using a rhetoric dividing undocumented migrants in good and bad migrants. " *Who wants to enter through the backdoor without knocking on the frontdoor is not desired* ". This lead to a ridiculous big difference in the conditions to obtains residence permits.. Migrant who never started a residence procedure, for example, had to present an employment contract to obtain a regularisation. The contract would permit them to obtain a residence permit for one year. Migrants who already demanded asylum once but had been refused asylum, however, could obtain a full and unlimited residence permit. Not many migrants will be regularised on the basis of this working permit, because this demand is utterly unrealistic. Despite the clarifications by the home office

not many employers will provide a formal employment contract for an undocumented employee. It seems like this regularisation has been a symbolic procedure of which not many undocumented migrants will benefit. Migrants who will benefit from this regularisations will be exceptions, a 'collateral damage' the government is willing to take.. It is highly sarcastic that a large Group of undocumented migrants who received a temporary working permit after long hunger strikes will not be able to obtain a permanent residence permit because many of them cannot prove that they are surviving on their own for more than five years, after trying to hide their existence out of fear of being detained or arrested. The regularisation agreement was necessary to force a breakthrough in the negotiations over a new migration policy. The debate has been stalled for a year because of the compromise that had to be reached concerning a regularisation. The concessions served to open up the possibilities for a consensus on migration. Some existing residence procedures were afterwards tightened up (reuniting families procedure, marriage, and obtaining the nationality). Everybody

who did not fit into the criteria is considered undesired, the only perspective remaining for them being the deportation back 'home'. Several right wing political parties will now ask for a number of measures aiming to detain and deport migrants who have been denied asylum and undocumented migrants as soon as possible. A number of these proposals will be dealt with further in this article.

## Closed detention centres in Belgium

Belgium has 5 closed detention centres (officially named "centres for illegals"). The eldest being the transit centre 127 located at the national airport in Zaventem. Since its opening in 1988 it is the deportation centre mainly for people withheld at the border of-fice on the airport, asking for asylum. Six years later, the closed detention centres in Merksplas (near Antwerp) and Steenokkerzeel (near the Zaventem airport) were in function. The buildings of the Merksplas detention centre had lost their original function as a detention centre for vagrants after the abolishment of the law on vagrancy. The state had moved its aim to the new vagrant: the illegal, giving a new content to the concept of unwanted people who need to be removed from society. In 1995 an old women's prison, closed because of its unsanitary condition, was transformed into the closed detention centre 'the refuge' in Bruges. In 2000 a new closed detention centre was constructed in Vottem. The normal period of detention is 2 months, but this can be prolonged if the 'service of foreigners' (DVZ) attempt to deport the detainee. This prolongation can amount up to 8 months, a measure reserved for those who the government considers a threat to the public order, a concept being vaguely interpreted. People resisting their deportation actively and who cannot be repatriated because of their resistance, however, can be locked up for much longer. After



each attempt the person is re-inscribed in the centre, putting the counter back on zero. In principle a detention for unlimited duration is possible. Sometimes there are attempts to deport people who refuse to identify themselves towards certain countries, even if their origin is not certain. This happens often to break their silence on their origins. Imagine an Ethiopian being deported towards Congo, while not being able to talk the languages, without having any contacts there to help him/her survive. It has happened that Moroccans are being deported to Algeria because of the tensions between Morocco and Algeria. If Algeria accepts the Moroccan migrant it will be impossible for this person to return to Morocco since all borders between Morocco and Algeria are closed. This measure is thus effectively used as a pressure to break people. In September 2010 the office of foreigners will finish the construction of a new closed detention centre in Steenokkerzeel. The new wing is specifically designed to imprison the 'unruly' migrants from over the whole country, thus separating them from the rest of the undocumented migrants. Officially individual cells are being constructed for people who have difficulties living in groups. It is easy to determine which migrants the state will think not suitable for living in group. The risk at incidents by centralising all people who act upon their desire for freedom by revolting is however higher. It is certain that the state will install a strict prison policy, putting in practice the image the government wanted to avoid. The decision to construct this new wing followed a revolt in the nearby closed detention centre in august 2008, in a period when the government hardly could manage to meet over infighting about the new migration policy. The new repressive measure however, fluidly found its way and reunited the different politicians. They can hardly wait until the works have finished in September 2010 since some cells in Steenokkerzeel have been set alight again in May of this year

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## Return housing for families

In October 2008 the office of foreigners introduced an alternative to the detention of undocumented migrant children much criticized by many organisations. Families are now being held in a so called 'return house' when they await a deportation or asylum procedure. The houses are being introduced by the government as holiday houses, where 'family coaches' take them shopping in local shops and children are able to attend local schools. The families have to sign an agreement with the office for foreigners promising to co-operate in their deportation. The irony is that the foreigners office has no real measures for deporting these families. Luckily the houses are not being locked after the (coach) leaves the house in the evening. With some logistical help several deportations have been sabotaged. However, " in 2009 about 60 families with about 100 children have been deported using the "return houses, a telltale sign of the same deportation policy with softer means.

## The impact of Europe on the detention of undocumented migrants

During the No Border camp in Brussel, Belgium will take presidency of the European council. Therefore it will have to be active in implementing the 'E.U return guideline, agreed upon in June 2008 by the European parliament. Because of this guideline, undocumented migrants can be locked up for a period of 18 months pending their deportation or release if they cannot be deported. It also involves a 5 year ban for the European union. Another toy for the E.U is the Stockholm program. It is a new version of the programs already decided upon in Tampere (1999) and Den Hague (2004) aiming to achieve a bigger cooperation on protecting our welfare and richness for the rest of the world. The focus point within the Stockholm program concerns the control of migration and the reinforcement of the outer border control. Under the Den Hague program the Frontex agency was created to coordinate the building of fortress Europe at its outer borders. The aim of this intensive program is to facilitate the re-integration in the country of origin. But the voluntary aspect of this method stops if the asylum seekers refuses the attempts of the assistant (read deportation functionary) to return the asylum demander. If Fedasil thinks the 'co-operation' is not ful-

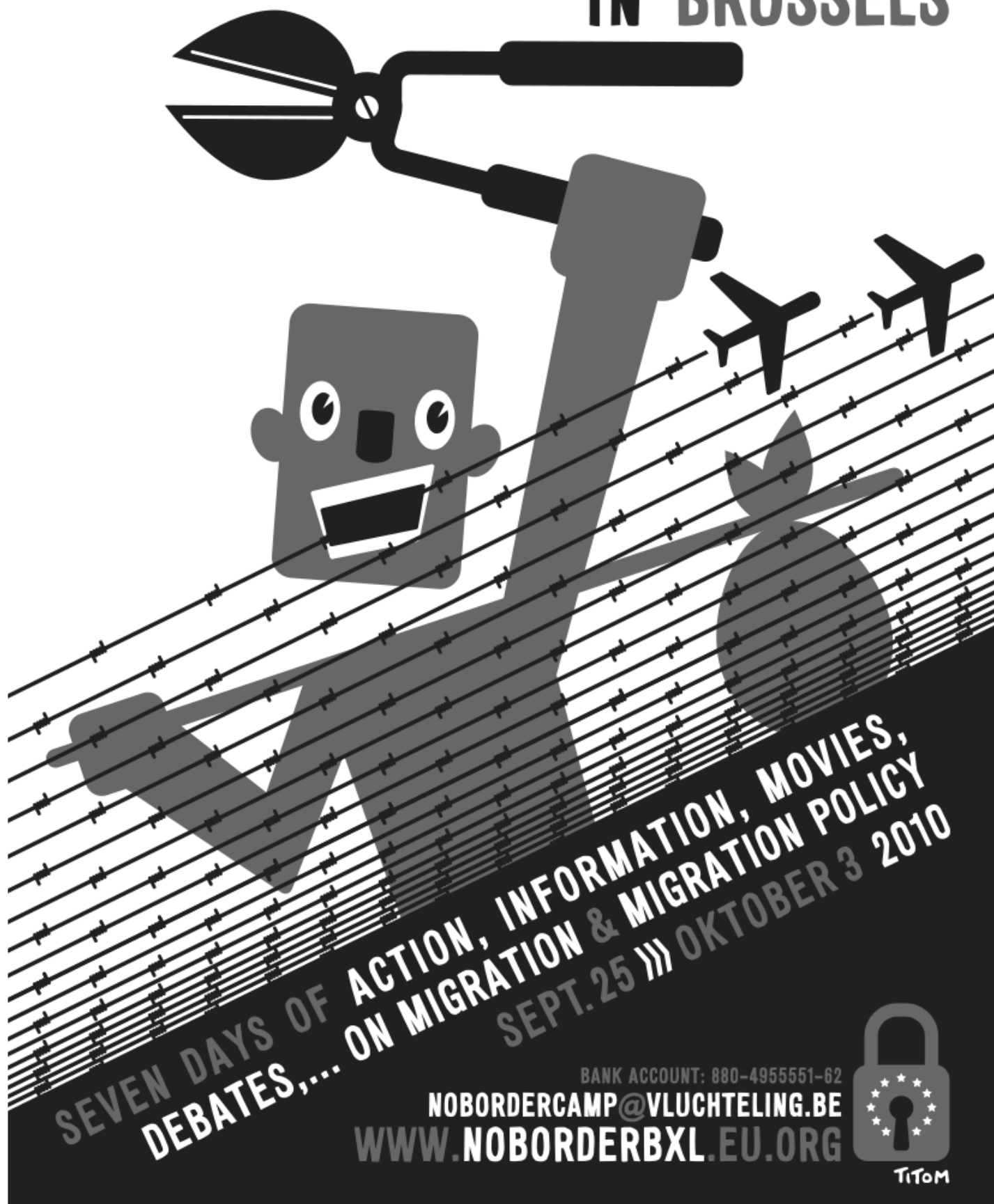
ly, it can file a demand to arrest a person and lock him or her up in a closed detention centre thereby starting up the procedure for a forced deportation. The same plan is being developed for undocumented migrant families who, under the children's rights convention, have to be accompanied. Who will not cooperate voluntarily risks detention. A return or a detention can be avoided off course by escapint the centre in time. Nevertheless an agreement like this will certainly set the mood of the modern migration policy Belgium will try to implement : giving shelter... or economic migration, who does not fit in will be deported one way or the other.

## Detention and deportations in numbers

Trying to keep the pressure on the kettle, undocumented migrants are daily harassed by police and other public servants (e.g. ticket controls at trains of busses, social inspection officers, etc) Sometimes this happens at random, based on appearance or hotspots for undocumented migrants, but more often during massive raids in specific neighbourhoods or streets where the city's poor are known to be found. In 2009, 17 938 people undocumented migrants have been arrested, the bulk of them being released immediately on the streets with an order to leave the Belgian territory. Nevertheless last year 4200 have been deported after detention in a closed detention centre, 1900 have been released. Actual numbers about the people held annually in closed detention centres are not released. The number of forced deportations is declining the last couple of years from 7000 in 2006 to 5000 in 2008. Notable is that the freedom of movement for people in the E.U doesn't mean more freedom in reality for people within the E.U : Bulgaria, Romany and Poland are in the top 5 of countries where detainees are being deported. Despite the new possibilities for people from new E.U countries to reach Belgium , it remains hard to obtain a permanent residence permit, forcing them into clandestine residence. Without jobs, or housing, they stand no chance for a residence permits, leaving them nothing but one way ticket back. The top of countries being the destination for deportations is completed by Brazil, Morocco, Russia.



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